Neighbours and Strangers: An Introduction to Urban Sociology

In The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), Jane Jacobs admitted that most of her ideas were conceived during travel, although, on closer inspection, they were waiting for her just outside the house. This course is about how, stepping over the threshold (or even without leaving your home), to look at cities in a new way; what questions to ask them; how to be more attentive to the surrounding reality. It will provide the participants with a number of optical devices offered by researchers in the field of urban sociology and urban studies. Due to the acquired knowledge and skills, you will be able to better analyze the processes in the city, become more sensitive to urban problems, and develop your own sociological imagination.

The course serves as an introduction to urban sociology, thus illustrating key discussions and inviting to a deeper acquaintance with selected topics. It focuses on the city as a key arena of (co)creation, consumption, a manifestation of culture, and on the actors shaping it. Its penetrating questions will be those defining connections and relations: why some aspects of reality, communities, spaces, structures, texts, sounds, visual markers, possibilities become "ours", while others are perceived as "strange", some remaining invisible? What makes these connections? Who are the actors who support, destroy and change them? What resources do they mobilize to support their own decisions and future projects? How can a "stranger" become a "neighbour"? Why is urban diversity an important resource for culture? In this course, I am interested in how we form ties with the city in its many manifestations and how, thanks to our knowledge, emotions and actions, the city (its past, present and future) ceases to be alien and becomes ours.

Lecture 1. Optics for the city. How to look at the city and understand it?

The introductory lecture deals with changes in cities in time and space, the study of cities by various branches of science, metaphors for the designation of the city, key concepts through which the city is defined in sociology. I suggest using connections and relations as a penetrating lens through which various aspects of urban life are analyzed. Finally, it is here that I explain the name of the course and why it is important for our cities that what we perceive as foreign and "strange" become, at least for a bit, "our own".

Homework: A list of cities

Lecture 2. The city and people. To live side by side, to live together

The lecture begins with a consideration of what it means to be a townsman or a townswoman. In it, I work out in detail the concepts of urban identity, loneliness, and communities in the city and how the latter are transformed into personalized networks. Then we look at urban everyday life and what role our corporeality plays in it. Finally, we talk about the city as an ecosystem where different forms of life coexist.

Homework: People at the stop

Lecture 3. The city and texts. Reading and understanding

The lecture is dedicated to the city as a text and to texts about the city: what stories they (do not) tell us. In it, we focus on the possibilities of reading the past through toponymy and urban landscape, mention the
struggle for the city walls, as well as reflect on the policy of memory in the city. In the lecture I use the materials from and invite to work with the digital resource *Lviv Streets* (a project of the Center for Urban History): https://streets.livivcenter.org/uk/

Homework: A walk on the map

**Lecture 4. The city and buildings. More than just four walls and a roof**

In the lecture we talk about how we interact with various structures in the city, how we define their function and how various ideologies are embodied in stone. I analyze the social dimension of architecture and, using the transformation of ideas about housing in the city as an example, point out the changes that are taking place with our way of life and with the possibilities to provide for basic human needs.

Homework: Three buildings

**Lecture 5. The city and space. Private, public, shared or divided**

The lecture will focus on how urban life is organized among buildings. In it I talk about the social production of space, about the multiple divisions and distinctions that fill the city, about places and non-places. It concludes with reflections on urban space as an arena for protests and for the formation of new categories of the common. In the lecture I quote the collection of interviews entitled *Personal Chronologies of the Euromaidan* (Urban Media Archive of the Center for Urban History): https://uma.livivcenter.org/uk/collections/146/interviews

Homework: Townspeople protest

**Lecture 6. The city and images. A journey through postcards and imaginary maps**

We begin the lecture with a reflection on various sensual experiences of the city. Next, we analyze our visual perception (how we look and what we see in our cities), as well as images of space: how, by whom and — most importantly — what for they are formed. We compare our individual mental maps with cultural production of images and branding of cities.

Homework: The city in memory

**Lecture 7. The city and sounds. Exploring the world with one’s ears**

In this lecture we analyze the concepts of sound landscape and acoustic communities. We switch to the aural perception of the city: we think about noise, silence, and conflicts around their regulation, we learn to listen to different sounds typical of the city and to connect them to the rhythms of urban life, we immerse ourselves in the sound of the city at the time of the pandemic due to the digital resource *Sound Landscape*
of Lviv (Lviv Interactive project of the Center for Urban History): https://lia.lvivcenter.org/uk/soundscape/

Finally, we recall how the city smells.

Homework: Listening exercise

Lecture 8. The city and flows: Who, what, where, from where, and why moves in the city

The lecture deals with the issue of mobility and reveals the connections inside and outside cities. I talk about the movement of people, resources, and information, about various infrastructures of the city and who owns them, as well as about the creation of over-urban networks through pipes, cables, and satellites. Finally, we reflect on how globalization and the World Wide Web are changing cities.

Homework: Nodes and networks

Lecture 9. The city and resources. Inherited, acquired, multiplied

The lecture answers the question of what the city and townsmen or townswomen own individually and together as a community. We look at different forms of capital, analyze how the control over resources in the city is exercised, rethink the concept of "common" and the right to the city as a collective one. Finally, I suggest considering time as an important resource of urban life and how the city structures it.

Homework: Accessibility of the city

Lecture 10. The city and the future. The ideas that will define our cities tomorrow

The last lecture of the course will focus on the future: what we want to see it like and how we embody this vision. We will recall the key ideas that influenced the 20th-century urban planning and reflect on their legacies, think about city management strategies and tactics and the role of participatory practices in this process, consider a number of adjectives that describe the desired cities. The main conclusion that I leave you is as follows: nurture your imagination, since it is from it that we draw hope for a better future.

Homework: The city tomorrow